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FROM THE OFFICE OF CONGRESSMAN BOB DOLE
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WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

Congressman Bob Dole (R-Kansas) said today that "Congress must undertake an urgently-needed investigation of the scandal-rocked U.S. Department of Agriculture because it is by now evident that the Department should not be entrusted with the job of investigating itself."

Dole indicated he still had no reply to his letters a week ago to Secretary Freeman, Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, Harold Cooley, and Chairman of the Subcommittee on Departmental Oversight and Consumer Relations, Paul Jones.

Dole introduced, on April 16, the first resolution calling for a Congressional probe of the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service of USDA, following disclosures by a Texas Court of Inquiry that some top officials of the Department allegedly accepted expensive gifts from Billie Sol Estes, who built a multi-million dollar agriculture-business empire and is now under indictment for fraud in that state.

The Kansas Congressman, a member of the House Agriculture Committee and the Subcommittee on Departmental Oversight and Consumer Relations, said:

"Congress writes farm legislation. Congress provides the funds to implement farm legislation. Congress has the responsibility of determining whether or not the laws it has enacted and the funds it has appropriated are being administered as Congress intended. There is already enough evidence to warrant a searching Congressional investigation of the Estes case, and the Department of Agriculture officials with whom he has been linked.

"Congress has a right to know--a right to determine for itself--what the facts are in a matter which so closely concerns Congress. Nevertheless, Members of Congress have had available to them virtually no information on the Estes case and its ramifications beyond what has been released through the Texas Court of Inquiry and what has been pieced together by enterprising reporters. The Department of Agriculture has supplied corroborating information, for the most part, only after the charges and the evidence had already been aired.

"It seems strange to me that where federal employees are involved as well as the integrity of the USDA, the public must rely on information obtained by a state court.

"Admit only what you must, seems to be the official USDA line. And, as more and more admissions become necessary, evidence that the Department of Agriculture will not over-

sively investigate itself becomes more and more convincing. The need for Congress to move becomes, also, more and more convincing.

"Now we learn through the press--not officially through the Department of Agriculture--that Secretary Freeman was warned more than a year ago by an Oklahoma attorney of possible illegal traffic in floating cotton acreage allotments. We learn further the Secretary gave assurance that illegal transfers of acreage allotments would be 'quite difficult', even though, at that very time, Estes' dealings in cotton allotments were being questioned by other high officials of USDA.

"We learn--again through the press and not through Department of Agriculture news releases--that two Oklahoma ASCS officials who allegedly had assisted in finding cotton allotments for transfer were suspended by USDA for 15 days without pay and were ordered to return some \$7,000 in finder's fees which they had collected. This would appear to be a mild penalty, coming as it did from the Department of Agriculture which, only a few weeks ago, was recommending prison sentences up to one year and fines up to \$5,000 for farmers who failed to keep such records and make such reports as the Secretary of Agriculture might require in connection with the Administration's proposed farm program.

"It seems strange, indeed, that the Secretary of Agriculture, who allegedly was warned of the potential cotton allotment scandal more than a year ago and whose Department conducted a revealing investigation of this only a few months ago, has not even suggested, in his many appearances before the House and Senate Agriculture Committees, that either new legislation or guidance was required from Congress in this most explosive matter.

"His emphasis is upon the 'wheat problem.' Obviously there is a 'cotton problem', as well. And, in addition, there is the urgent problem of the Department's administration of present agricultural programs. Congress has a clear duty to investigate--now."